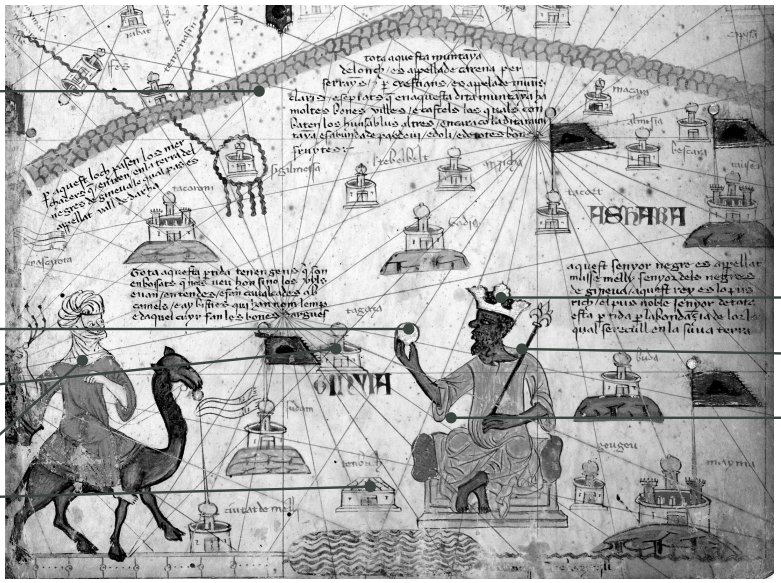
MANSA MUSA ON THE CATALAN ATLAS

An atlas is a book or set of maps. This one was made in 1375 on the island of Majorca, in the Mediterranean Sea, and is thought to be the work of the mapmaker Abraham Cresques. Painted on parchment in bright colors and gold, it showed the world as European sailors and merchants knew it. This part shows the western Sahara. It is kept today in the national library of France. The words beside the king say: “This Black lord is called Musa of Mali, lord of the Black people of Guinea. This king is the richest and noblest lord of all this land because of the abundance of gold gathered in his land.”



WHAT THE LABELS SHOW

Mansa Musa The ruler of Mali, drawn on a throne in the middle of West Africa. The mapmaker never saw him and drew him from traders’ reports.

Gold nugget The round piece of gold the king holds up. Gold was what Europeans knew best about Mali, and the mapmaker made it the center of the picture.

Crown A gold crown drawn like a European king’s crown. The mapmaker pictured an African ruler the way Europeans pictured their own kings.

Scepter The gold rod the king holds in his other hand, a sign of a ruler’s power, again drawn in the European style.

Camel rider A rider in a turban, with a veil over his face against the sun and sand, on a camel. Desert peoples like him guided the caravans.

Atlas Mountains The long brown band across the top of this part of the map: the mountains of Morocco, north of the Sahara.

Taghaza Written “tagaza” on the map, beside a black flag. It was the salt-mine town in the middle of the Sahara.

Timbuktu Written “tenbuch” on the map. It was the trading and learning city of Mali, near the bend of the Niger River.